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# Review of *Der Bassai-Fries*, by Charline Hofkes-Brukker and Alfred Mallwitz

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## BOOKS

Charline Hofkes-Brukker and Alfred Mallwitz, *Der Bassai-Fries*, Munich: Prestel-Verlag, 1975. 180 pp., 2 folding pls., 117 illus., plans, drawings. DM 85.00.

It is a paradox of archaeological studies that one of the best-preserved monuments of antiquity, the temple of Apollo at Bassai (Arkadia), should remain so problematic, both in the interpretation of its plan and in the evaluation of its unusual inner frieze carvings. These two main aspects of the building are so strictly connected that neither can be satisfactorily discussed in isolation. Despite their fame, however, they have received only sporadic attention, and never the monographic treatment and definitive publication they deserve. The 1946 book by E. Kenner, with few introductory comments on the architecture, concentrated on the frieze, but the author could only work from old photographs, since the reliefs themselves were still inaccessible in the postwar British Museum. Of the several articles devoted to the architectural problems, a major study by W. B. Dinsmoor, in *AJA*, LX (1956), 401-452, attempted to reconstruct the sequence of the frieze slabs on the basis of fastening marks on architrave and frieze backers. No agreement has been reached on virtually any point. The Bassai frieze is now displayed in an arrangement worked out by P. Corbett, but no theoretical basis for the sequence has yet been published. Architectural articles continue to appear—the latest by R. Martin, *BCH*, C (1976), 427-442—but each proposes a different reading of the plan rather than supplying a stone-by-stone account of the remains.

The book under review could therefore have filled a great gap in our factual knowledge. Its double-barreled approach, encompassing both the architecture and the sculpture, could have resulted in an authoritative, if not definitive, publication. Yet it is fair to state from the beginning that such high expectations have not been met; for all its value, Hofkes-Brukker and Mallwitz's contribution remains provisional.

The project was begun by Hofkes-Brukker in 1957, under the inspiration of W. Hahland,

a Bassai expert who had written on both the architecture and the sculpture. In 1962 Mallwitz's article on the temple plan sparked the idea of a joint publication, with Mallwitz completing his contribution by 1973. In 1970 E. M. Stresow-Czakó took excellent photographs of the frieze which Hofkes-Brukker, who meanwhile had published several articles on selected Bassai topics, arranged in what she considered the original sequence.

The resultant book is composed as follows. An initial section by Mallwitz describes the discovery of the temple, the general sanctuary, and the building itself with its unusual N-S orientation. Analysis focuses on floor and ceiling patterns, and gives rise to the theory of three successive plans for the structure within a relatively short time. Chronology (ca. 430-400) and architect(s) are briefly discussed in the closing pages. The second section by Hofkes-Brukker is by far the more extensive. Introductory comments on subject matter and arrangement are followed by description of the frieze slabs printed below the pertinent photographs. In order to demonstrate sequential principles, each slab is illustrated twice, so that turning the pages does not break the visual continuity. Major traits of style and composition are treated in two more "chapters" with many subheadings (B:1-6; C:1-6), and the entire frieze project is attributed to Paionios. An English summary (trans. J. W. Graham) outlines only the sculptural conclusions. Selected bibliography, index, and a chart of measurements (the slabs as originally carved and as eventually cut down) are followed by a folding plate comparing the present display in the British Museum (the frieze as set up in the temple) with the sequence as originally planned, before alterations, according to Hofkes-Brukker's theories. The museum inventory numbers are retained, but preceded by "H" and a serial number in the postulated sequence.

Mallwitz's contribution does not greatly differ from his 1962 article: he only formulates his arguments from a different angle and publishes a newly drawn plan. The original project (X—attribution to Iktinos) called for

a  $\pi$ -shaped inner colonnade with four-sided Ionic capitals supporting the carved frieze. When spur walls were added (by another architect) for technical as well as aesthetic (?) reasons, the columns became semi-columns with curtailed capitals, and with spreading bases for purely optical purposes (project Y). When the two southernmost capitals flanking the central column proved aesthetically unsatisfactory, the corresponding spur-walls were made diagonal and three Corinthian capitals were substituted, to avoid corner problems (plan Z). These changes resulted in the diagonal walls being built without adequate underpinning, their bases expanding beyond the original stylobate, and demanded a reduction of the frieze length. In the book, the reasoning is reversed, each previous plan being deduced from the anomalies in the final arrangement. Yet I would question the existence of *three* Corinthian capitals, because of the accounts of the early excavators and the difference in the column bases, the central one being unique, not simply a less spreading version of the lateral ones. Once this argument is eliminated, so is the reason for changing plan Y into plan Z. In addition, the very deep underpinning of the inner colonnade revealed by Greek testing in 1971 suggests that spur-walls were planned from the very beginning, in what Martin considers a Peloponnesian tradition, thus invalidating plan X.

Other criticism seems premature. N. Yalouris and F. Cooper's new investigation and testing at the site are soon to be incorporated into a book by Cooper which promises to give the stone-by-stone account we still need. Mallwitz's theories will then find their ultimate touchstone.

So will Hofkes-Brukker's arrangement of the frieze slabs. Though some of her sequences are convincing, others could be questioned. For instance, she uses Centaureomachy slab H 11-528 as an example of continuity between plaques by visualizing the left-handmost Lapith as moving to defend a youth being attacked beyond the joint. But (by personal analysis in 1974) I could detect the Lapith's fingers on the near-

by Centaur's neck, helping to bring the monster down. The Lapith's involvement would then remain within his own slab, rather than extending to the next. That this narrative crossing of joints could indeed exist is shown by a shooting Amazon on H 15-534 which, with Corbett, I would confront with the warrior on H 22-533 (rather than with H 16-535). These, however, are details. Hofkes-Brukker's main point is that the two narrative cycles, Amazonomachy and Centauromachy, were originally planned to meet in the center of the cella, since the uneven number of slabs in each cycle, with consequent uneven length, would correspond well with the difference in the two halves of the cella measured on the E-W axis of the middle spur-walls. Thus both cycles are divided into three parts, with the central one occupying the short side, either frieze confronting in its entirety a viewer standing in the center of the naos.

This is an attractive hypothesis, but I find disturbing that each cycle should begin at the edge of its respective pier, with a consequent staggering of the central alignment which no amount of aesthetic arguing can defend. The master who could plan overlapping compositions could also have designed two central slabs with a change of subject at mid-length. Some contradiction also exists between Mallwitz's and Hofkes-Brukker's theories. The former believes that the frieze was always meant to encircle the cella over the supports, thus *in front* of the walls—hence the anta-like projection of the north door jambs, which the floor slabs confirm as part of the initial plan (X). Yet Hofkes-Brukker's arrangement calls for an original frieze extending to the north wall, which was later shortened to run over the face of the doorframe. It is also hard to understand why certain slabs were shortened at the expense of the carvings, while others were left with ample space at the joints.

Beyond subjective speculation, what could have had permanent value, but was not done, was to provide an in-depth description of each slab, not only compositionally but in its technical details. True, the main text is supplemented in the footnotes by "antiquarian and technical" comments; but these fall far short of completeness. Since the reliefs could now be examined directly, rather than through casts or photographs, it would have been important to call attention to the differences in the carving, the many ways of connecting figures to the background, the variant renderings of certain features. For instance, baldrics are usually added in metal, but in a few cases they are carved directly on the bodies. Eyes are concave (a fourth-century trait?) but in some instances bulge. Body proportions vary greatly, as well as facial renderings; some Centaurs have humps on their backs, some humans show veins,

knuckles, and Venus rings—a whole wealth of details that only direct confrontation can reveal, no matter how superb the illustrations.

On more theoretical grounds: the omission of the sculptured metopes from the discussion makes the treatment of the frieze seriously incomplete. The hypothetical career of the master sculptor, Paionios (?), with a bout in South Italy under the influence of the elusive Pythagoras, is not convincing, nor is the tracing of the various elements of style to different geographical areas. The text is difficult to read and even the English summary does not improve matters. Such drawbacks offset the many positive sides of Hofkes-Brukker's study: impressive learning, wide range, keen intuitions, and some obviously compelling and original interpretations.

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Francesca Boitani, Maria Cataldi, and Marinella Pasquinucci, *Etruscan Cities* (with an introduction by Mario Torelli), New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1975, 336 pp., color pls., illus., maps. \$30.00.

Several fundamental books on Etruscan civilization recently have made their appearance in English-language editions, chief among them Luisa Banti's *The Etruscan Cities and Their Culture* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1973), a translation of *Il Mondo degli Etruschi*, and Massimo Pallottino's *The Etruscans* (Bloomington and London: Indiana University Press, 1975), from the sixth edition of *Etruscologia*.

The admirable volume here reviewed is a welcome addition to literature on the Etruscans, the more so since its appearance in translation has followed so swiftly upon its publication (in two editions) in Italian. Essentially a compilation of descriptions and discussions of numerous sites where Etruscan occupancy has been recognized, it also includes introductory chapters on history, religion, language, and art and descriptions of three major Italian museums with Etruscan collections (The Museo Archeologico in Florence, the Museo Gregoriano Etrusco in the Vatican, and the Museo di Villa Giulia in Rome). The material is handled crisply and informatively, with a judicious balance of text and illustrations in color and no trace of the high-pitched verbiage that can appear in general treatments of the "mysterious" Etruscans.

A historical introduction of unusual clar-

ity by Mario Torelli provides not only a reasonable outline of the development of Etruscan civilization but also stimulating comments about the nature of Etruscan society. Of interest, for example, are his remarks about the revitalization of Etruscan power and culture at the close of the fifth century B.C.; this revision of the traditional view of Etruscan "decline" is surely correct and affects the judgment of numerous later monuments, whose chronology and interpretation are often linked to beliefs about the state of Etruscan power and its impact upon the national psyche.

The other introductory sections are less extensive; that on art, while very sound, is regrettably also brief. Given the material discussed in the heart of the book, some readers might wish for a more detailed treatment; the novice may turn elsewhere.

The main focus of the volume is on the "places" of Etruria—a task similar to that which occupied George Dennis in his invaluable *Cities and Cemeteries of Etruria* a century ago. Divided into northern and southern sectors, the fifty locations ("cities" is perhaps not the correct word for all) are carefully described, ranging from great cities such as Tarquinia and Vulci to far less familiar sites like Vada and Pieve Súcana. A section on "Etruscan expansion" includes places beyond the borders of Etruria to which the Etruscans extended their power; Capua and Marzabotto are representative.

The texts are descriptive and factual, rather than speculative, and they provide concise and up-to-date records for the places. For almost all, there are accompanying illustrations—photographs of structures and objects, maps, and plans. This illustrative material is generally at least adequate, in many cases excellent, and, on occasion, even beautiful. Not everyone will be enchanted by the ground plans drawn against green grounds (to match the maps?) but it is useful to have these records conveniently assembled.

The extent of each entry is naturally conditioned by the character and history of the site during antiquity; it is also affected by the extent and nature of its modern exploration. A venerable and powerful city, such as Tarquinia, about which a good deal is known, can be covered in some detail; a smaller place, perhaps not so favored in antiquity nor in modern excavation, must have a far less extensive entry. Nonetheless, the inclusion of lesser sites is especially welcome.

By the same token, discussions of recent discoveries add considerably to the value of this volume; one can cite among many examples a section on Porto Clementino (Gravisca) and its evidence for Greeks in Etruria in the Archaic period and another passage on Acquarossa, with its unusually well preserved layout and Archaic house remains.